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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9587
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS PRIORITY
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 2795
RUCNTXD/AMEMBASSY MAJURO PRIORITY 0070
RUEHPB/AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY 3880
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA PRIORITY 0177
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5221
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 2026
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 4754
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2250
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 2863
RUEHBAD/AMCONSUL PERTH 0970
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAAIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHJJPI/USPACOM HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JAKARTA 001393

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, EAP/ANP, DRL, DRL/AWH
NSC FOR E.PHU

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TAGS: PGOV PINS KDEM ID

SUBJECT: PAPUA -- MORE ARRESTS FOR "FLAG RAISING"

REF: JAKARTA 1297 AND PREVIOUS

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Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Authorities in the Papuan region of eastern Indonesia have detained 41 people and may charge nine in connection with an incident in which a flag with separatist connotations was raised during a peaceful protest. Human rights groups are mobilizing for the detainees' legal defense, but anticipate an uphill struggle. This is the latest in a string of incidents where Papuans have expressed their discontent with persistent underdevelopment in their region and the slow implementation of the region's Special Autonomy Law. END SUMMARY.

ARRESTS FOR RAISING THE "MORNING STAR"

¶2. (SBU) There has been more tension in the restive Papua region. Police in Fakfak, a town in the southern part of West Papua Province, detained 41 people for raising the "Morning Star" flag during a peaceful rally on July 19. The GOI considers the flag a separatist symbol. Activists organized the demonstration to protest the slow implementation of Papua's Special Autonomy Law and the province's continuing underdevelopment. (Note: It is the case that the outlawed Papua Freedom Movement, OPM, and other pro-independence groups use the flag. Many Papuans who are not separatists also favor the Morning Star flag, however, seeing it as a cultural not a political symbol.)

¶3. (SBU) The authorities released all but nine of the detainees after questioning them. The Fakfak bupati (district head) reportedly gave the released detainees a stern warning that authorities would not tolerate further incidents of this sort.

DEFENSE GEARS UP

¶4. (C) Re the nine still under detention, Papuan human rights sources told us that the authorities plan to charge six with treason and three with the lesser charge of

participating in an illegal demonstration. Prosecution plans are not yet finalized, however. Human rights groups are mobilizing to defend the detainees, who could face prison sentences of up to 20 years if convicted of treason. Paula Makabory of the Institute for Papuan Advocacy and Human Rights told poloff that a coalition of human rights groups was organizing legal representation for the group. Makabory expects the defense to face an uphill battle, as the two alleged leaders of the protest, Simon Tuturop and Tadeus Weripang, are well-known to authorities (they were imprisoned during the Suharto era for alleged involvement in the OPM).

DISCONTENT IN THE REGION

¶5. (C) The Fakfak incident is one of a series of recent instances where Papuans raised the Morning Star flag during peaceful protests. Twelve Papuan activists are currently on trial for a flag raising incident in Manokwari, the capital of West Papua. Others have been detained in Jayapura, the capital of Papua province, and in Timika, site of U.S. company Freeport-McMoRan's mining operations (see reftel).

¶6. (C) The most recent arrests are notable because Fakfak has not regularly been a site of Papuan political activism. Whether the Fakfak incident has any direct links to the previous incidents remains unclear. Overall, the flag raising incidents underscore the discontent many Papuans feel over the slow implementation of Papua's Special Autonomy Law and persistent underdevelopment in the region. Another aspect of the problem includes the long-standing tensions that exist between indigenous Papuans and migrants from other parts of Indonesia (Fakfak is known as a region that is popular with migrants due to its relative proximity to other

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parts of Indonesia).

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